Visceral Theology
Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southeast
Second Semester 2004-05

I. Visceral Theology: Crumbs of Historical theology from the perspective of hunger

Time: Thursdays 2:00-5:00
Room: 260 B
Instructor: Eliseo Pérez-Álvarez (eperez@lsps.edu)
Office hours: T, Th 10:00-12:00

II. Description:

Biblical-historical approach to eatables and drinkables and the role they have played in the theological task. The menu includes: Deus edens or the God who eats and feeds; Theology of the cross and bread; Covenant vs. food terrorism; Taste conquest through the Eucharist; Hospitality over gastro-anomy and gastro-mania; Vegetarianism-femininity heresy; transubstantiation or trangenicization; The liturgical-agricultural calendar; Gastronomical spirituality; Culinary predestination; Spicy heavenography; The most exquisite utopia: an open table.

III. Objectives:

By the end of the course, the participants will be able to:
Develop a critical appraisal of the weekly readings, in order to cook new ways of doing theology and pastoral work.
Acquire methodological tools to continue exploring the material implications of a committed pastoral ministry.
Articulate the centrality of food in the Bible with the theological and parish work dimensions.

IV. Chronogram:

February
3 Diagnostic evaluation.?Syllabus negotiation/ semester assignments.
10 Food and hunger in the Hebrew Bible?Breaking Bread (15–35), Juengst.

24 Early and Pre-Constantinian Church? And You Welcomed Me, (13-57) Oden

March

3 Christendom 4th. – 15th. ? And You Welcomed Me, 215-279) Oden

10 The dis-encounter of the three kitchens: Africa, America and Europe


17 Spring Break

24 Maundy Thursday

The Reformations 16th.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (200-246), Cunningham-Grell.

31 The Enlightenment 18th.

¡Vivan los tamales! (231-251), Pilcher.

April

7 The Industrial Era 19th.

Book review # 3: Pérez-Álvarez, Eliseo. We Be Jammin” (First Part).

14 The Green Revolution – The transgenics 20th.

Farmageddon (1-8, 169-196), Kneen.

21 NAFTA, 20th. – 21rst. “ALCA and pedagogy for oppression” Petras

28 Feedback, Delivering of grades. “Banquet!”

V. Evaluation:

A. Attendance and alert participation in the working sessions: 20%
B. To write a diary which may include: 40%
   1. The hermeneutical circle: acting-reflecting-acting.
   2. The critical reflection on several classroom experiences.
3. The articulation of practical though modest proposals, for pastoral action.
4. Research on hunger which can be focused on a specific topic within a biblical-historical perspective.
5. Newspaper cuttings.
6. Ingredients from the weekly required readings.
7. Daily short entries (It’s a diary; not a diarrhea!)

C. Three critical reviews: Between 2 and 3 pages each: 40%

VI. Bibliography:

A. Required readings:
Petras, James. “ALCA and pedagogy for oppression” http://www.rebelion 26-10-04

B. Web Sites
- http://www.caritasofaustin.org/
- http://www.elca.org/hunger
- http://www.bread.org
- http://www.cloc
- http://www.fian
- http://www.foodfirst.org
- http://www.grain
- http://www.rebelion
- http://www.worldhunger.org
- http://www.sosalliance.org

C. Movies
- The Princess Diaries (England: Walt Disney, 2003)
- Sugar Cane Alley (Martinique: Euzhan Palcy, 107 min. 1985)
• Beyond Borders (USA: Paramount Study, 2003)
• Huelepega; la ley de la calle (Venezuela)
• La última cena (Cuba: Tomás Gutiérrez Alea)
• Fiddler on the Roof (Russia: CBS Fox, Norman Jewison, 169 min. 1971)
• Soul Food (USA: 20th. Century Fox, 114 min. 1997)
• Women on Top (USA: 20th. Century Fox, Fina Tórres, 108 min. 2000)
• Like Water for Chocolate (México: Alfonso Arau, 1987)
• Buffalo 66 (USA: Gallo-Vincent, 1997)
• Tortilla Soup (USA: Héctor Elizondo)
• Mostly Martha (Germany: Sandra Nettlebeck, 106 min. 2002)
• Fools Rush In (USA: Columbia Trisatar Studios)
• What’s Cooking? (USA: Galaxi Angel, 2001)
• Babette’s Feast (Denmark: The Danish Film Institute, Gabriel Axel, 120 min. 1988)
• Rodrigo D. No Future (Colombia)
• Pixote (Brasil)
• Eating (USA)
• Super Zise Me (USA)
• Los Olvidados (The Young and the Damned) (México: Luis Buñuel, 80 min. 1950).
• The Natural History of the Chiken (USA)
• El Norte (México)

Bibliography
1. Food and hunger in the Hebrew Bible
2. Food and hunger in the New Testament
   • Gowers, Emily. The Loaded Table: Representations of Food in Roman Literature, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
3. Early and Pre-Constantinian Church
4. Christendom IV – XV
5. The des-encounter of the three kitchens: Africa, America and Europe
• Mintz, Sidney W. Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and


6. The Reformations XVI


7. The Enlightenment XVIII


8. The Industrial Era XIX


9. The Green Revolution

• Ziegler, Jean. El hambre en el mundo explicada a mi hijo. Muchnik.
10. The transgenics XX
A. Deus edens or the God who eats and feeds
B. Theology of the cross and bread
Aguirre, Rafael. La mesa compartida; estudios del NT desde las ciencias sociales. Santander: Sal Terrae, 1994.
C. Covenant vs. food terrorism
Semprún, Jorge - Olivier Longué. Geopolítica del hambre; cuando el hambre es un arma...


D. Taste conquest through the Eucharist


E. Hospitality over gastro-anomy and gastro-mania


F. Vegetarianism-femininity heresy


G. Transubstantiation or trangenicization


H. The liturgical-agricultural calendar


I. Gastronomical spirituality


J. Culinary predestination


K. Spicy heavenography


L. The most exquisite utopia: an open table.


M. Eat, Drink and be merry, that tomorrow we will diet!

N. “The More the Merrier” Anorexy and Obesity
O. Ecce Panis: Ontology and Food
P. Ethiquete
Food and hunger in the Hebrew Bible
• Amos 8. 4-7
• Isaiah 65.21-22
To Eat and to Be

We know that hunger is mortal. And if we know that,
does it make any sense to waste time arguing
whether the soul is immortal?

Camilo Torres (1929-1966)

Lecture 05/22/1965

A philosophical dictum states: Primum vivere, deinde philosophari (first we live, and then we
philosophize). Kierkegaard underscored: Livet kan kun forståes baglæns, men det må leves
forlæns (life has to be understood backwards but it must be lived forwards). From the
perspective of the table, what matters is: Primum est edere, deinde philosophari (first we eat, and
then we philosophize). Berthold Brecht (1898-1956) put it this way: Erst kommt das Fressen,
dann die Moral (Grub first, then ethics).

Heidegger raised the ontological question: “why are there things instead of nothing?” But
Brazilian theologian Vitor Westhelle links ontology with food: “why there are things instead of
food on my table?” Last century still a polite salutation among Chinese peasants was: “Have you
eaten?”

Feurbach was right in asserting: Der Mensch ist was er ißt, we are what we eat, nonetheless, he
took for granted everybody had access to food. Jesus is telling us: “We are not, unless we
eat.” He articulated the table with the ontological horizon. There’s a continuity between our
being and our eating. Francis of Assisi rightly said: “my sister hen, my brother wheat.”

To Christ the fulfilling of His Father’s will was food; and to us infants, who milk the Word of the
heavens, Christ Himself is food. Hence seeking is called sucking; for those infants who seek the
Word, the Father’s nipples of the love of humankind supply milk.

- Clement of Alexandria, Paedagogos 1.6. 46.1
Without food, there is no life. When starving people eat food, they experience God “in every grain.” They “know” and “taste” God when they chew each grain. Food makes them alive. The greatest love of God for the starving people is food. When the grain from the earth sustains their life, they discover the meaning of the phrase, “For God so loves this world that He gives His beloved Son.” When God gives them food through other concerned human beings, God gives them God’s “beloved Son,” Jesus Christ.

- Cheng Jun Kyung

“One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dine well.”- Virginia Wolf  A Room of One’s Own

Only one thing matters on earth: the revolution which well provide food for the entire world.”

- Simone Weil (1909-43)

The Reformations 16th, 17th Centuries

Thomas Muntzer (1489-1525)
As Thomas Muntzer has said, "If you do not want the bitter Christ you will eat yourself to death on honey." Or, to put it another way, there comes a time in all our lives when "Smile, God loves you" just doesn't hack it anymore”

Albert Durer (1471-1528)
“while they stand ready to take the fateful bite of that forbidden fruit, a cat waits at their feet, poised to pounce upon the unsuspecting mouse. Her capacity for murderous violence –and that of all living creatures- is about to unleashed by human sin” (Pagle, Elaine.  Adam, Eve and the Serpent, 148).

Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556)
Spiritual Exercises (SE 210-217)  “reach a level of moderation” he pursued “what is most appropriate for his physical sustenance” (SE 213)
“that one’s whole mind should not be intent on what is being consumed; and nor should the consumer be put under pressure by his appetite but instead should be his own master”. (SE 214-216)

“after eating or having dinner or at other times when you are not hungry, choose what you will eat at your next meal. . . a quantity that is fitting to eat” (SE 217).  (Cortina,  29-30).

Benedict of Palermo, “The Little Black Saint” (1526-1589)
Illiterate laybrother,  cook, son of African slaves, a Franciscan.  Patron of African-Americans in USA.  He was represented carrying Jesus and with a small cauldron.

Martin de Porres  (1579-1639)
Peruvian mulatoe.  Nurse, cook and laybrother of the Dominican order.
Represented as feeding a dog, cat and mouse while telling them: “eat my brothers and don’t fight”

Cromwell, Oliver (1559-1658) Seized the very rare fertile land of Ireland for the English landowers. Cereals grew poorly. Potato was the solution to solve hunger. British didn’t care because potato was not listed in the Bible, it was food of conquered people, they were not familiar with eating tubers, potato was associated with leprosy and promiscuity, it belong to an inferior race, it was a threat to civilization. (Pollan, 2002, 198 ff)


Enlightenment

Malthus, Thomas Robert (1766-1834). His logic consisted in asserting two main people’s impulses: food and sex. Therefore, famine prevent demographic exploitation. Potato then is immoral because by alleviating hunger breaks the balance of human population: “the indolent and turbulent habits of the lower Irish can never be corrected while the potato system enables them to increase so much beyond the regular demand for labour” (Pollan, 2002, 204)

Gastro-anomie

The family that eats together... might prefer not to”
“A full time house wife who lives with her family at Minneapolis says that each one of the members of her family is in charge of their own nutritional needs since she stopped planning and preparing their meals three years ago. David, a 13–year-old, survives based on a diet of cereal, milk, peanut butter, raisins, frozen pizza, orange juice, McDonald’s hamburgers, french fries, and milk shakes. Some times I’m sure he will be converted into a pizza, but his height is 6 feet. And he is a vigorous athlete”. Delzell says that her family could’ve organized to eat together “with a long term planning, sacrificing individual interests, a complex juggling of schedules, or if needed, by force. But everything we got when we made an attempt was a strong resentment on the children’s part, a major pressure for my husband and frustration for me. The change in our life style means that we get more time to share together–even though it is not at meal time- and we are more relaxed.” (Linda E. Delzell, “The family that eats together... might prefer not to”, Ms, 8:56-57, 1980)

Emile Durkheim The Division of Labour in Society (1893). Anomie: a condition of deregulation that was accumulating society. A state where norms are confused. The break down of norms.

Anti-cooking

Feminist


Socialist

Edward Bellamy (1850-97) Looking Backward 1887.

2. I thank René Krüger for this quotation.